

OBITUARY

Arthur Maitland Emmet 1908–2001

The death of Maitland Emmet aged 92 on 3 March 2001 takes from us one of the greatest microlepidopterists of the 20th century.

Maitland Emmet joined the Society (then the 'South London') in 1965, was elected President in 1972 and was made an Honorary member in the late 1970s. For most of the 1970s and 1980s he was a regular attender at indoor meetings and a glance through our proceedings will show what significant contributions he made. He also led field meetings, particularly the post-Exhibition meeting which concentrated on leaf-mining Lepidoptera. As Editor of both editions of *The Field Guide to the smaller British Lepidoptera* he made a great contribution to the life of the Society as well as to the study of Microlepidoptera, not only in Britain but across northern Europe. Although his Neptieulidae collection, his herbarium and examples of a few selected Microlepidoptera have been given to the Natural History Museum, the bulk of his collection has been bequeathed to this society. This will make valuable additions to the Microlepidoptera and there are also Indian butterflies.

He was elected an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Entomological Society in 1984; he was also an honorary member of the Amateur Entomologists' Society (AES), of which he had been President, and he was a fellow of the Linnean Society. He was an active member of the Essex Field Club and belonged to its Moth Group. In 1981 he was awarded the Stamford Raffles Medal by the Zoological Society of London for his contribution as an amateur to Natural History. Butterfly Conservation made him the first recipient of their Marsh lifetime achievement award.

Other obituaries, especially in the national press, have given accounts of his early life; here we shall concentrate on his contribution to entomology. Whilst he began with an interest in butterflies, and collected these in India, his main interest in the last

50 years has been the Microlepidoptera, and especially the leaf miners among them.

He added to the British list on his own the following species: *Ectoedemia spinosella* (Joannis), *Stigmella carpinnella* (Heinemann), *S. paradoxa* (Frey), *Caloptilia rufipennella* (Hübner), *Phyllonorycter platani* (Staudinger), *Coleophora adjectella* Herrieh-Schäffer and *Sorhagenia rhamniella* (-Zeller). With Sydney Seardsdale Brown he added *Stigmella erythrogenella* (Joannis), and with Raymond Uffen he added *Coleophora fuscicornis* Zeller. He reinstated to our list *Stigmella ulmariae* (Woeke).

No less a task was the sorting out of various species-complexes, notably the *Stigmella ruficapitella* group: *S. roborella* (Johansson), *S. atricapitella* (Haworth), *S. svenssoni* (Johansson) and *S. samiatella* (Zeller); also *Ectoedemia heringi* (Toll) and *E.*



Maitland Emmet: Annual Exhibition 1999.
photo: Richard Jones

subbimaculella (Haworth). He documented a number of species which had been discovered by others; these include *Stiginella zelleriella* (Snellen), *Bohemannia auriciliella* (Joannis), *Caloptilia robustella* Jäckh, *Phyllonorycter leucographella* (Zeller) and *Argyresthia trifasciata* Staudinger.

Many unknown life histories were discovered by him; sometimes these were the subject of articles, at other times the information was quietly inserted into the *Field Guide* or *The Moths and Butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland*. In the field Emmet was a tireless worker with great observational skills. He began by learning from Stan Wakely but soon went on to specialise in the Nepticulidae to which most people had paid scant attention; he applied himself to learning to distinguish the mines, and the larvae within them; he bred the great majority of species and always recorded and published his observations. When there was a group which presented a problem he would use great application to resolve it by his own observations and by use of the literature; he became well known in the libraries of the Natural History Museum and Cambridge University. Whilst he would seek the opinion of others on differences in genitalia, he never made slide preparations himself. A series of papers on this group culminated in his contribution to Volume 1 of *The Moths and Butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland*. He soon applied himself to other leaf-mining species so that he made a significant contribution to the chapter on Gracillariidae in Volume 2 of the same series. He became very adept at recording larval mines and he used this especially in mapping the distribution of Microlepidoptera in Essex, spending many days touring the county with his wife. *The smaller moths of Essex* was published in 1981. Until this time he had scorned entomologists who relied on moth traps for their captures, urging them instead to go out into the field by day, but in 1983 his sister gave him a moth trap and he took a greater interest in macrolepidoptera. He would arrange to plug in the moth trap in an under-recorded part of the county and so built up data which enabled him and the late Geoff Pyman to publish *The larger moths and butterflies of Essex* in 1985.

He had already become familiar with the Coleophoridae and their cases and, when Volume 3 of *MBGBI* was being prepared, he determined to describe not only the cases and how they were constructed, but also the larvae within them. This was an amazing feat, much of which he achieved by his own efforts. As the years progressed he became less fit for field work, especially after the death of his wife Katie, but he still made accurate lists of everything which came to his garden trap, getting up at the crack of dawn to be before the birds. His garden list amounted to an impressive 984 species.

As a writer and editor Maitland Emmet brought together his classical training with his understanding of the scientific method. Having been both schoolmaster and examiner he had no problem in detecting and correcting the errors of others, and at times his red pen was wielded with great zeal. A review he wrote for the *AES Bulletin* began "On no account buy this book."! He was quick to spot errors and omissions and would not hesitate to say so, but at the same time he would give praise where it was due, and would always be keen to encourage one in whom he saw promise. This made him an invaluable editor for Harley Books and when John Heath died he soon became the senior editor of *The Moths and Butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland*. Besides his taxonomic work he researched and wrote chapters on the English names of Butterflies, and the table of life histories in Volume 7 part 2 was produced largely on his own and was a huge piece of work. It was Basil Harley also who published *The scientific names of the British Lepidoptera, their history and meaning*, which is a classic by any standard and well worth dipping into. The best tribute we can pay is to list his work in the bibliography at the end of this obituary.

As a person and colleague Maitland's company was always to be valued. Besides his boundless energy and powers of observation there was always his courtesy and humour. He married Katie only in 1972 but she accompanied him on nearly all his entomological sorties, adding her own captures and observations. Their hospitality was warm, and the sherry flowed freely in the evenings. His sense of humour was very broad as shown in a paper which he wrote, but felt was not fit for publication; he would say that it needed to be read aloud to be appreciated. We include it here since it has given amusement to several of his friends:

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

On the subject of the scientific names of Lepidoptera, A.A. Allen (1982) writes, "Much of their charm resides in the host of subtle associations they conjure up, their flights of fancy, their imagery, quaint caprices and concepts."

The following story is told entirely in the names of Lepidoptera as given by Kloet & Hincks (1972), and those of their authors, abbreviated where appropriate. The theme of the story is incorrect combination and this is reflected in the nomenclature.

It's the rich what gets the pleasure,
It's the poor what gets the blame,
It's the same the whole world over,
Isn't it a blooming shame!

Impura, dissoluta adonis (Rich.) *cautella, immaculatella, virginicensis*. "Hylas!" "Imella". *Arte lecheana humerella, confusella*: "Mi nisella, decentella, ndea splendidella". *Saucia, Elachista hermannella, oo, ciliella*. *Subsequana* Frölich *costella dia*.

Nudaria prostratella (Bed.). *Impudens* Mann *lixella* (Tutt). *Degenerata* Coverd. *modestella*. *Grandipennis elongata, erectana verticalis, incerta abdominalis; piercella* (Forst.); *servella* (Fuchs); *plumbella, upupana, ramella* (Cram.) *continuella* Bjerk., *fagiella* (Fab.); *comes*. *Augasma saturatella*. *Genitalana* Sehrank *psi*. "Myella, io tenerella" (Pey.). *Inconstans desertella* (Ratz.). *Hadeua siurilella, rapae* Sod. *Adaina, Cyathia ausonia*.

Seqella bigella, rotundella, distentella Pod. *Pina suspecta quaestiuella*: "Nodosella or pilella?" "Gnoma", *sedella*. "Uitella". "Ino angelicella", *wailesella*. *Desperatella Prays*. *Par fumatella* Knaggs. "Bena badiella, ignobilella, vilella, horridella, putridella, cinerella Haw.". *Dispar harrisella, canella, lambdella*. *Alienata, castigata, abjecta fugitivella*. *Gemina* Hatch. *Pinella* (Constant). *Neglecta, solitariella, pallidella, siccella*. *Luzella* (Ob.) *Funerella. Terminella*.

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